



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics

June 3, 1969

Dr. John Gardner
The Urban Coalition
1819 H Street, N. W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Dr. Gardner,

Sometime ago you asked me to help on the work of the Health Task Force under Dr. Silver's direction. For various reasons I have not been able to make nearly as constructive a contribution to this work as I would have liked. This experience has, however, helped to put in sharper focus that not enough intelligent thought has been devoted to the role of medical research in helping to meet near term problems in urban health. The action oriented groups which are heavily represented on Dr. Silver's Task Force are, to my view, regrettably inperceptive about the potential range of these contributions and take for granted that we already have sufficient knowledge to prescribe the health care that merely needs to be delivered to the community. On the other hand, I would be the first to insist that the academic community is insufficiently aware of the facts of life today and simply does not know just how to direct its energies to the solution of real, contemporary problems.

In the light of your own training and experience you must, I believe, be no less sensitive to these issues than I am and I would urge you now to give the question of research for urban health some part of your own personal attention. The Health Task Force Document is inherently defective in its exclusion of these concerns from its basic agenda but it may be just as well if these questions are separated for more intense analysis by another group.

A prototype of the kind of investigation and communication that I would urge you to consider is the document "Onehundred Problems in Environmental Health", a study edited by Jack McKee of Cal Tech and a large group of collaborators and published in 1961. I am sure you have ready access to this; unfortunately I do not have a spare copy myself. There is, of course, considerable overlap between the concerns of that study and those of urban health generally but there are many additional issues upon which it would be profitable to focus the attention of many sophisticated scientific minds. I am enclosing a copy of a recent letter addressed to Dr. Silver which illustrates some of the material that I think might be gone into.

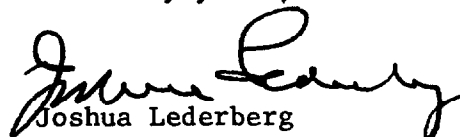
GARDNER, John

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I realize that this proposal would be more forceful if it would be accompanied by an offer on my own part to take the immediate direction of it. However, I have already made a comparable commitment for the National Institute of Mental Health for a somewhat similar study in that field. Furthermore, the public health questions that should be the center of interest in the urban health research study are so far removed from the area of my own expert knowledge that I would feel rather uncomfortable about undertaking such a responsibility. I do believe, however, that the Urban Coalition can exercise an important leadership role in this matter and I would be happy to consult with you further if I can be of special help in any part of it. Apart from any personal contribution that I might make there is a large community of interested and qualified people at Stanford who, I believe, could be readily mobilized to make an important effort. You are also well aware of an enormous fund of student energy that needs better leadership than it has had so far.

In retrospect I regret that I did not already seize on the opportunity of my consultation with the Health Task Force to use it as a focus of a student seminar. Let me at least remark on that as a lesson for the future, namely that you urge your consultants to consider that possibility and that the time scale for staging different part of the report be made consistent with this possibility.

Sincerely yours,


Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

Enclosure
JL/rr